

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

v.

Docket # 19 Cr. 696 (PAE)

ARI TEMAN,

Defendant.

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**SUPPLEMENTAL SENTENCING LETTER**

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July 16, 2021

Hon. Paul A. Engelmayer  
U.S. District Judge  
Southern District of New York  
40 Foley Square  
New York, NY 10007

Re: U.S. v. Ari Teman  
19 Cr. 696 (PAE)

Dear Judge Engelmayer:

Thank you for the opportunity to supplement the sentencing submission previously filed on behalf of our client Ari Teman.

By this submission, we hope to be able to share with your Honor another side of our client. A young man who is generous to a fault and a person who has made a difference in this world – in many very positive ways – and we trust that your Honor will factor his good works into your sentencing equation, and help to dilute many of the impressions that your Honor may have gleaned from the case.

Your Honor has already received many letters that speak to Mr. Teman's good deeds and commitment to community service; however, in this submission we hope to be able to share some additional insights and Mr. Teman's own words with the Court.

**Ari Teman's Shaky Start: Childhood**

Ari Teman has described his childhood to counsel as both a blessing and a challenge. He describes his parents as great people who really care, not only about their own children, but about their community, their people, and their countries – the United States and Israel. More than just words, his parents showed up – they took action to right wrongs and they taught their two children that standing up for what you believe is an important part of defining who you are as a person. Ari and his parents were estranged for some time; but they have mended their fences. Ari explains that he is very proud of his parents because they are the kind of people who help others – not only when they were asked – but before anyone had to ask. He explained that if he has done anything right in his life, it is to model their behavior in a way that would make them proud.

Young Ari smiling for the camera in his Cub Scouts uniform.



Ari explained that as a youngster, his Dad sent him to the Cub Scouts to learn to serve his community and his country; but he did more than that – his Dad became a den leader and later a pack leader. He worshiped his father, who worked incredibly long hours building technology for banks. In the evenings and on the weekends, his Dad would prepare lessons and materials that would help his community's young men and women be more self-sufficient and better able to serve others. Ari attended synagogue with his Dad on a regular basis and recalls watching his father, who was a skilled carpenter, help to make repairs in the synagogue, often late as night, after a long day's work. As a youngster, he remembers trying to help his Dad build mounts for the Torah scrolls, which are still in use decades later. As the congregation grew, Ari remembers accompanying his Dad in the evenings, as he helped to build an extension, as the synagogue expand to serve additional members of their extended community. He learned from his father, who donated his technical and his woodworking skills to youth programs, charities and synagogues. He recalls, even today, that as a young child, his father helped men with debilitating illnesses like ALS capture a few more connected months of life through technology. It is with great pride that he explained that his Dad always stood up for the underdog. Ari explained this has taught both Ari and his sister the value of doing the right thing, even in the face of adversity.

Ari is equally proud of his mother, Suzan, who he describes as an artist and a fighter. She made sure that the kids had art classes, and she hovered near as Ari and his sister did their homework; what he remembers most about his mother, however, is that she would fight for what was right. If a teacher was abusive to students, Suzan Teman was the mom to come in and try to help – sometimes the fighter and always the peacemaker. Ari posits that perhaps this was his mother's way of combating the demons that haunted her. As a child, Ari explained that his mother lived with an abusive stepdad who beat her younger siblings and her mother. Ari says

that his mother's mission in life has always been to never let anyone slide if they were hurting others. Critically, cruelty – even in the form of sibling rivalry – was strictly prohibited in the Teman family and in their extended circle of friends. He describes his mother as loving – but tough. He offers, with pride, that he thinks his parents were great teachers and great role models for him and his sister.

Ari also shared that he was terribly abused by his peers in elementary and high school – “relentlessly bullied” on the school bus, walking into school, in the classrooms, at lunch, recess, and gym class. He described how the other kids would gang up on him in the bathroom and how the older kids often hit him with broomsticks. Kids read essays about his big ears, his dandruff and his goofy mannerisms while, as Ari recalls it, teachers sat silently. Even now these memories bring him to tears as he recalls the whole class laughing at him. These memories remain vivid, even today, and he relates how his teachers all looked the other way and let the other students torment him.

When we asked him to share his memories of this time for us he wrote:

I developed stomach conditions from the anxiety that lasted for years. My bowels would churn so much from fear in the morning that I could not get off the toilet, and I remember once my Dad dragging me to the bus. Of course, this anxiety, and likely a dose of mild Aspergers, only attracted more bullying. School, and synagogue youth groups, were not a place to see friends, they were where I got beaten up, physically and emotionally. This went on through high school, where as a freshman, a senior pulled a knife on me and threatened to stick it up my ass (they were less culturally sensitive back then), and when I complained to the principal about my fear of being stabbed the boy was disciplined, but his friends spent the next year pushing me down flights of stairs and bullying me in the hallways.

He continues by offering that there were actually some good parts of high school:

I learned to play the drums and had a band. High School is when I started my website building business. I got internships and summer jobs, with the help of my Dad's friends, building intranets for various organizations. I became quite expert in web development and learned a great deal from some of the best in the business about project management and presentation.

Ari with his parents, the rabbi, and his wife, when he awarded “Alumni of the Year”.



### **Brandeis University**

Ari explained that his life began to take a more positive turn once he started school at Brandeis. He began to make friends and handle social situations with less clumsiness – as his high school guidance counselors had predicted. At Brandeis he was able to build a small but solid circle of close friends, many of whom remain his friends today. There, he played in bands and the university orchestra. He learned that as he got older “being smart was not something for which you were bullied, but respected.”

While he was raised in the “modern orthodox” tradition, at Brandeis, he began a spiritual journey, becoming less traditionally religious at times, and more at others. Ultimately, he explains that he became closer with “[his] people”.

Ari’s father’s skills in woodworking and technology and his mother’s artistic talents, which they had shared generously with their children, enhanced his college life. Ari explained that he became close with the new Chabad Rabbi on campus, and helped the young congregation build their first Chabad House. He recalls gathering other students and supplies at Home Depot and finishing the basement so the Rabbi’s infant son (now an adult) would not breathe in the fiberglass insulation when he played. Ari also helped to build the Chabad’s first online Shabbat dinner system (something now taken for granted) and their annual Sukkah – which was described by the Boston Globe as the largest in the Boston area. One of his contribution, one that his Rabbi is still proud of – was something referred to as the “triple sinks”. To speed up the hand washing ritual that precedes the breaking of bread, Ari designed a sink with three faucets that he welded together in the art studio. Then, the 150 students who regularly attended the Chabad’s Shabbat dinner could wash their hands before breaking bread much faster than just using the one kitchen sink. Ari shared: “When I’m in Boston and stop by for a visit, the Rabbi tells students I’m ‘the triple sink creator’ – it’s an odd form of (non) celebrity.”

Ari is proud that his parents’ fighting spirit also came out in him. When one umbrella religious organization at Brandeis wanted to shut down Chabad’s services, Ari explained that he joined with a friend, who is now a constitutional law attorney in Chicago, and together they fought to keep the campus open for all religious expression, helping to dispel rumors and quash

misunderstandings. He also started a newspaper at Brandeis called, “The Indi”, and made the news in the local Boston Globe satellite paper for paying students for their work, and for using an online platform to collect, organize and publish articles, something also taken for granted today. When the school-funded paper tried to shut us down, he explained that he reached out to a legend a few towns over, Professor Alan Dershowitz, and he and his “FIRE” organization made clear to Brandeis that they should leave us alone. That, he shares, is how he knows “The Professor”.

### **Ari Finds the Volunteer Organization JCorps**

After college, Ari founded JCorps. He came up with the idea in the middle of the night, and the next day, he registered a domain, set up a website, and messaged a friend saying, “I have a genius idea!” He laughed as he recalls his friend’s response – which was “No way!” But with just \$300 for the website and a bunch of tee shirts, he built what became a seven-city international volunteer organization that has led thousands of young Jewish adults to volunteer in children’s hospitals, senior centers, soup kitchens, animal shelters, parks, and more.

Ari (in a black t-shirt) with a group of volunteers for the organization JCorps, founded by Ari.



To build JCorps, Ari explained that he used the same technology he had taught himself (with the help of his Dad) to manage volunteers, and track performance, in order to create what he hoped would be the most reliable volunteer network. He explained further, that it was important that if he used the name “JCorps”, the Jewish “Social Volunteering™” network, that he could present to people as honest and reliable because. In describing the birth of JCorps, Ari explained:

Every volunteer would get a verification email with a section titled “Your Word,” which explained that JCorps “exists as a conversation”, that we only exist because we keep our word to the organizations we help that we will show up, and we can only do that if the volunteers keep their word to us. We took this seriously. Young adults who were called into work last-minute would send me emails, “Dear Mr. Teman...” to apologize for being unreliable.



This, he explained, would “crack [him] up” – that anyone would call me “Mister” – because, at the time, he was 24 and “Mr. Teman” had always been his father!

Ari with children during a JCorps volunteering mission.



Looking back at JCorps, Ari says:

This is and will likely remain the greatest thing I have ever done. Not because of the accolades, the awards, or the press, but because it showed me the power and thrill of igniting in someone the realization that everyone can make a difference in someone’s life, even through the smallest acts of kindness.

Ari remembers a volunteer who wrote that she had been depressed because she felt that men were nice to her only because of her looks – not a problem that he claims he could relate to! She explained that she would never forget how during one volunteering event, she put a tray of food down in front of an elderly woman at a soup kitchen, and had a conversation with her. She recalls that the elderly woman cheered up, and this young volunteer felt meaningful as she had not felt before in her life. Ari proudly shares that his young woman became a regular volunteer and team leader, and she met her husband at a JCorps event. This, he explained, happened a lot – that there are quite a few JCorps marriages, and a lot of JCorps babies.



Photos from JCorps events, including an event at a children's hospital, with Ari, JCorps volunteers, and community members.



### **JCorps Leads Ari to The White House And Beyond**

Ari cannot keep a straight face when he shares what he calls his “White House” story. One day, during the early stages of his stand-up comedy career, he was waiting to meet Wally Collins, a comedian and a one-time warm-up act for David Letterman. Ari hoped Collins would give him some professional advice. Then, his phone rang. The caller ID said only “202”. He answered – and the conversation went as follows:

- Q: Is this Ari Teman?  
A: Yes.  
Q: This is Danielle, from the White House.  
A: The White House?  
Q: Yes, “The White House.”  
A: Sure...“In Washington, D.C.”?

And, as if she had heard the dumbest question of her life, she replied, “Yeah, that one.” Ari explained that he had no time for the call because he was meeting a fellow comedian for lunch. He had assumed that the call likely came from a bar called “The White House” who



wanted to offer him a low paying gig. In fact, as he later learned, he had accidentally blown off *THE* White House.



Ari at the Comedy Club (left) and the Laugh Factory (right).

Astonishingly, the White House called back shortly thereafter. The representative explained to Ari: “The President and Mrs. Obama would like to congratulate you on your founding JCorps. My team would like to get your input on young adult volunteering, but I am calling because the President and First Lady would like to invite you to the White House Hanukkah Party. Are you available?” Ari immediately replied that he would, of course, clear his calendar. Ari made it to Washington D.C., where he was honored to meet President Obama and shake his hand. He recalls with some embarrassment that he told a joke to President Obama, who cracked up, and then reached over the rope that separated them and gave him a bear hug. Ari fondly recalls eating potato latkes and mini-jelly donuts under a painting of Abe Lincoln that night, and he felt truly honored.



Ari being greeted by President Barack Obama at the White House Hannukah Party.

Ari also met Senator Joe Liberman at the White House Hannukah party. Ari was honored to discover that Senator Liberman knew JCorps.



JCorps expanded to Israel and Canada, as Team Leaders moved and wanted to replicate JCorps' good works in their new cities, to do as their tag line announced, "Make Friends. Make a Difference."

**JCorps expands its mission of volunteers to Jerusalem**

ABIGAIL KLEIN LEICHMAN

A Teaneck native's experiment in "Jewish social volunteering" has taken just two years to grow beyond its original Manhattan bounds and spread across many states, several countries, and — most recently — Toronto, Montreal, and Jerusalem.

JCorps International, a non-denominational Jewish volunteer organization founded by Ari Teman, 27, offers charitable activities on Sundays for singles aged 18 to 28. They feed the hungry, entertain senior citizens and pediatric patients, paint houses for the poor, and clean up parks.

On just one weekend last month, JCorps volunteers visited children in hospitals in New York and Jerusalem, and worked at a food pantry in Montreal, said Teman, a graduate of Torah Academy of Bergen County and Brandeis University. He owns the consulting firm Igurus.

The Jerusalem region got its start when JCorps volunteer Ron Azari, a recent Yeshiva University graduate, moved to Israel last summer.

Ron had two months of free time before going into the army, so he decided to start a branch of our volunteer organization," said Teman. He had suggested that

JCorps volunteers at the pediatric wing of Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center. From left are Jesse Nowlin, Sara Fried, and Michael Seidman. SHIRA BERENSON

each event's participants evenly on the basis of gender.

"The point is to enable our volunteers to meet other interesting people while doing something productive," said Teman, who is also an aspiring stand-up comic. "People come because it's a social thing, and then they're surprised how much they connect to an activity. It's not a fake environment in a social hall or at a charity dinner where you have nothing to talk about."

Azari tap his friend, Columbia alumna Shira Berenson, for her organizational skills. Berenson is studying at Padeis Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem this year.

Azari and Berenson went right to work researching volunteer opportunities and networking among friends and acquaintances. In a short time, word got out to so many potential volunteers from a variety of Jerusalem-area educational institutions that events so far have been fully subscribed.

Much of the organization's success can be credited to its viral exposure on the social-networking site Facebook. The Jerusalem group alone has 320 Facebook members.

"We're very good at Facebook connections," said Teman, who lives in Manhattan. "The day you volunteer, your picture's up and your friends see it. At least 30 percent of our volunteers come from having seen photos of their friends volunteering. It's very cost-effective."

Jesse Nowlin, a Teaneck resident and TABC graduate, joined the crew last summer, before leaving for a year of study in Israel. He explained that the Jerusalem group does its volunteering on Fridays, the first day of the Israeli weekend.

"We go to soup kitchens, visit people at hospitals, do manual labor — anything where there is a need for a bunch of hands," said Nowlin. "We send invitations to our events through Facebook, with a link to the JCorps site to sign up. We only take a certain number of volunteers for each activity. If you get in, you get an e-mail, and the day of the event you get a wake-up phone call. Generally, there's a waiting list for events."

Berenson said future activities will include planting a garden with Ethiopian children and sprucing up the downtown facility that houses Crossroads, a drop-in center for English-speaking teenagers at risk. "People keep asking for more events," she said.

Though JCorps is for singles only, that aspect is downplayed. There is no attempt at matchmaking or balancing

And although it may offer a customized birthright Israel trip in the coming months, JCorps keeps its Jewish character low-key as well.

"We're completely non-denominational and have no religious mission whatsoever," said Teman. "We won't go into an old synagogue and help them clean it up; we don't help anybody build a sukkah."

He said he dislikes applying the popular term "tikun olam" to what JCorps does. "I only have Sunday available for volunteering for a few hours — it's not saving the world," he said.

Nevertheless, the organization's achievements have caught the attention of Jewish academicians.

"In the last few months, we've been researched by interviewers at Hebrew University and Brandeis University who are studying how to get unaffiliated Jews to stay involved, especially after college," said Teman.

"We offer a very easy way to identify as Jewish in any way each volunteer interprets that. You don't have to have an opinion on Israel or faith. Thousands simply come and say, 'I'm Jewish and I'm volunteering.'"



Jerusalem JCorps members peel potatoes at a soup kitchen. From left are Deborah Anstandig, Yoni Ashar, Yoni Weisbrod, Aryeh Weingast, Jesse Nowlin, and Leah Raub. SHIRA BERENSON

### A newspaper article that discusses the founding of JCorps and its activities in Jerusalem.

Ari explains that the most-rewarding times of JCorps were the moments he spent with kids in hospitals, teaching them how to draw a car, or whatever they wanted to draw. He explained that the kids got to pick the colors, and the shapes, and for a moment during their difficult days, they got to feel a bit of power, a bit of control, and for once it was them calling the shots and not the nurses, doctors, or parents. Ari has been haunted much of his life with depression, and he explains that those hours he spent in hospitals volunteering reminded him that it was best to use his time to worry about others instead of himself.

As Your Honor will see later in this submission, Ari continues his work as a JCorps volunteer, now with the Surfside community. He hopes Your Honor will allow him to continue that vital work.

### **12gurus Charity**

From running JCorps, Ari thought that many nonprofits could benefit from running more like a business by tracking metrics, investing in improving skills, and investing in marketing. He explained that he wanted to help other nonprofits run more like startup companies, and share best practices, so he founded “NextGen: Charity”, which later morphed into “12gurus: Charity”. Your Honor can see testimonials and video of the talks at: [12gurusCharity.com](http://12gurusCharity.com)



A screenshot of a video of a talk organized by Ari's organization, 12gurus Charity.

As part of this effort, Ari invited speakers from the top organizations, and best-selling authors, to present 18-minute, TED-style talks, backed by media and design, rented a theater, and filmed everything in four-camera HD. The director of filming for this project was the photo editor of his Brandeis newspaper, who became one of his best friends, and has since become an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Ari explains, with pride, that the video ended up on the TED homepage as “Best of the Web”, and millions of people have watched their content. Speakers included leaders from the following nonprofits: Water, DoSomething, DressForSuccess, Michael J Fox Foundation, KIPP Schools, Acumen Fund, DonorsChoose, and others. Audiences came from large foundations and organizations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, Schusterman, Chabad, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and all the way to small, upstart nonprofits.

Ari hasn't held a conference for a few years, but hopes to restart it once this dark chapter of his life is behind him and he still keeps the videos online at [12gurusCharity.com](http://12gurusCharity.com) so charities can benefit, and people continue to watch and share them.

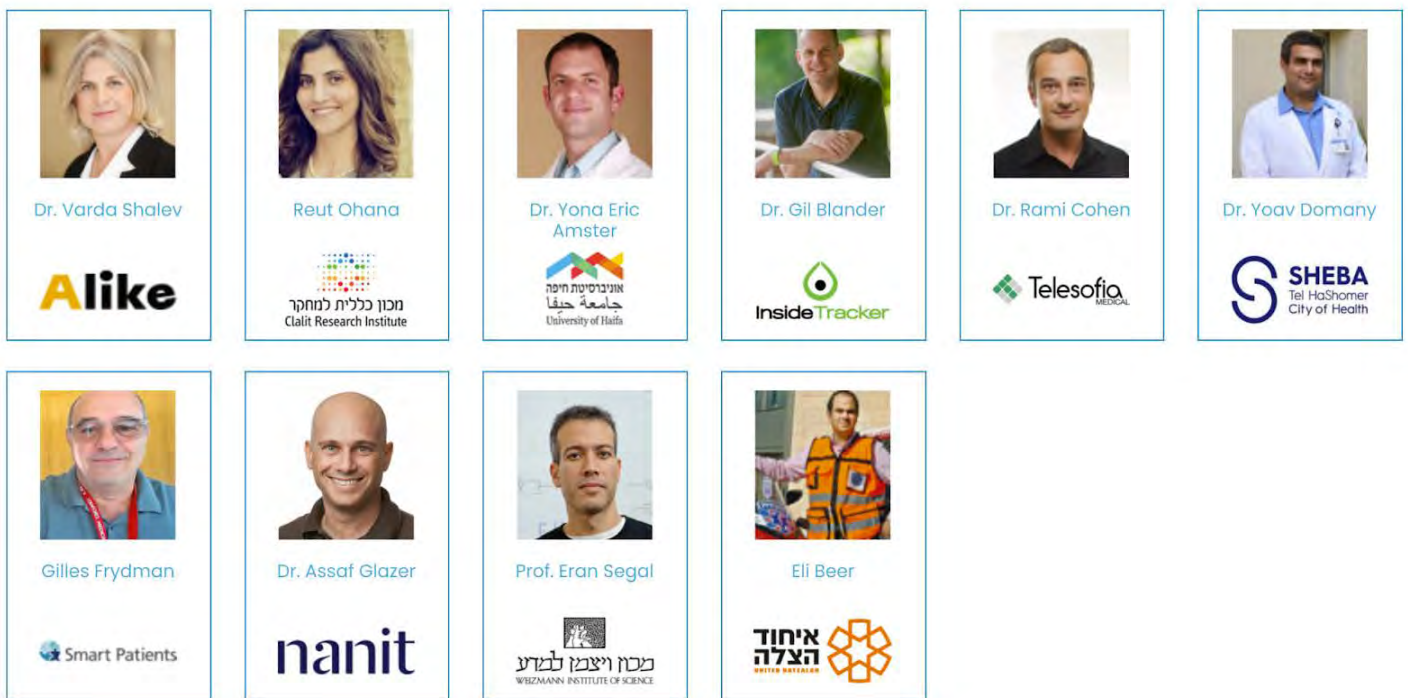
### **12gurus Charity Health Conferences**

A friend of Ari's who was in medical school at NYU, loved the conferences, and wanted to expand the concept to the health care sector. Ari and his friend launched a medical conference at



<https://12gurusHealth.com>. The head of NYU's Clinical Medicine Department, and a professor at UNC who was published over 400 times, became chairs of the initiative and speakers from the Mayo Clinic, Harvard, Yale, Michigan, MIT, Columbia, IBM Watson participated. They gave tickets to those who could not afford them, such as medical and nursing students, and they refused to take money to put anyone on stage (although participants could, of course, rent a booth in the trade show). Ari reports that participants said it was like nothing they had ever seen or done before. I encourage Your Honor to watch the testimonial and other videos of the talks on the website, as they speak for themselves.

Though his future is currently in limbo, Ari has been planning another conference with the UAE, and has lined up top physicians, researchers, and experts from Israel to share their ideas with their new peace partners, including:



### **Ari's Health Issues and His PTSD Related to Involuntary Confinement**

At the same time that he was running these conferences, and JCorps, and doing stand-up, Ari became ill. At first, it seemed to be fatigue and he assumed it was his schedule or his diet. But the fatigue became crippling and he was often unable to get out of bed. Beginning in September 2009 and for six months, Ari was seen by a medical practice which turned out poorly for Ari. He ended up in an involuntary psychiatric commitment which was deeply traumatizing for him. In October 2012, after multiple doctors tried and failed to help Ari, he went to the Weill Cornell psychiatric ER. Since the impetus of Ari's difficulties seemed to stem from his near total inability to sleep, the doctors there determined that taking care of his sleep issues had to be addressed first. Ari explained that the treatment he received at Weill Cornell was near miraculous. The sleep studies showed that he wasn't getting REM sleep due to a breathing

disorder. A test at NYU's sleep lab confirmed that he stopped breathing 27 times per hour and got only 5-6% REM sleep, when the healthy range is 20-25%.

Ari eventually learned that his sleeping problems were a function of a number of problems with his airways. After considerable research, Ari found a highly rated specialized surgeon in Thousand Oaks, CA. That surgeon performed an 11-hour surgery and rebuilt his airways. Ari reports that he has since been able to sleep without sedatives.

Ari reports that he continues to experience episodes from the crippling effects of PTSD – a result of the abuse he suffered from the involuntary psychiatric commitment. Ari has been in treatment for these issues, and while he is the first to recognize that he is not entirely cured, “by any means – as your Honor has seen – with regrets”, he continues to work on his coping skills. Ari confesses that he still “suffers tremendously” from this episode. Counsel shares this information with the Court with the hope that it will help Your Honor understand the terror that attends the notion of incarceration.

### **Hurricane Sandy and JCorps**

Ari recalled the moment he walked out of that Weill Cornell ER, and the rain was pouring down, because Hurricane Sandy was headed to New York. He shared that he curled into his bed with the sedatives prescribed for him at the hospital, and when he woke up, there was no power in New York City. He grabbed his laptop, reached out to Rabbi Levi, went to his home, camped out on his floor and sent out a blast asking JCorps volunteers to sign up because help was desperately needed. A day after leaving a psychiatric ER, Ari was energized by the needs of others – he immediately began organizing volunteers, tracking tasks, and making sure they could meet the needs of as many people as possible.

Within a matter of hours, he had assembled 120 volunteers and organized them throughout the downtown area. Ari explained that they helped over the next week carrying water and food up hundreds of flights of stairs to elderly New Yorkers who were unable to evacuate. JCorps ended up covering much of the subsidized housing from the West Village all the way to the Lower East Side, where many older Jewish people were pleading for help. Ari explained that by charging cell phones in vehicles, he, the local rabbis, and other community leaders were able to communicate about which buildings had people in trouble.

Volunteers would bike or walk because roads downtown were blocked, lights were not functioning, and of course there was flooding from the storm. Other times they would hop into someone's car to get close enough to the next spot to walk. Somehow it worked out. Because the group of JCorps volunteers were nimble, they would sometimes beat the National Guard to a spot and distribute water and food before the National Guard arrived. Ari ran the entire operation from his laptop and cellphone wherever he could find electrical power. Ari explains that this was one of the greatest challenges and experiences of his life. After living through debilitating, torturous illness, he felt useful again.



### **Ari Continues To Struggle**

Ari could not work for months while he was recovering from surgery. He still needed to find a way to pay rent, and he did so by subletting his own apartment on Airbnb, while he slept on various friends' sofas. It took Ari a long time to completely recover from his surgery. He notably had issues with his short-term memory for a long time. After a dispute with Airbnb, Ari could not get a lease in New York and he was homeless for quite some time, while he was still struggling mentally. Ari was able to enter into some short-term sublets, temporary rooms and low-grade hotels. Since he was not yet working anything near full time, he often rented a desk at the co-working space WeWork, and slept under his rented desk.

Through his continued struggles, Ari nevertheless worked on several business ventures. One of Ari's most recent ventures involves the use of UVC light to kill viruses like COVID-19, which he hopes to be able to commercialize.

Ari during an interview with the Today show, talking about a business venture.



### **Ari's Struggles in Isolation**

Ari has gone through struggles in his life. But these past 15 months have been the most difficult in his life. He has been isolated 20 hours per day for much of the last 15 months. His mental health is as fragile as it has been, and he knows he puts an unfair burden on those close to him, including his girlfriend. He is constantly anxious, and still struggles with sleep deprivation. Ari has a long history of health problems, as discussed above, but as he says, his arrest in this case has “thrown [him] completely off kilter.”

Ari's main companion for the past 15 months has been a small Australian Shepherd. As he tells it: "she looks at me as if I need to get my life together, and she is not wrong."



Ari has tried to soothe his anxiety through art during his isolation on home confinement. These are some of the many canvases he has painted.





### **Ari's Jewish Service and the Jewish Community**

Jewish faith and the Jewish community is a big part of Ari's beliefs, culture and identity. Ari's parents are observant, as are many of his friends. Ari himself still attends Jewish services when his curfew allows, and he keeps kosher. He maintains very strong ties with the Jewish community. As an example, when Israel was being attacked by rockets years ago, Ari flew to Israel and brought along his friend Danny Cohen, a Comedy Cellar comedian, and they performed for people in bomb shelters throughout Israel.

Ari performing stand-up comedy at an Iron Dome command base in Israel.



Ari has maintained a very close relationship with the Chabad Lubavitch movement, as Rabbi Lipskar's letter (submitted earlier) related. Indeed, Ari was invited to speak at the

International Conference, Kinnus HaShluchim, on how to get young adults involved in volunteering. Ari was also invited, on multiple occasions, to the Chabad's annual banquet. Ari has spoken, performed, and coached at hundreds synagogues, Chabad Houses, Jewish day schools, community centers, and AISH centers.

### **Ari's Volunteering With The Recovery Efforts of The Surfside Condo Collapse in Miami**

When the tragedy of the collapse of a condo building in Surfside happened, Ari rushed immediately to help. Amid the chaos, organizers were struggling to organize volunteers, and were overwhelmed with emails, calls, and direct messages. Ari used his experience with JCorps to set up VolunteerSurfside.org and helped organizations direct requests there, and find skilled volunteers as needed.

For example, it was Ari's database that found the chef who prepared the nighttime meals for the first responders. As a further example, Ari introduced the United Hatzalah of Israel psychotrauma team to the Miami Dade Fire Department, and walked the Fire liaison to meet the IDF interview team. Ari brought networking cables, chargers, batteries and hubs to power cellular telephones, provide cellular signal and WiFi internet. Ari also came up with the idea of identifying missing people using the data from Amazon on packages they would send to the condo, which he understands law enforcement was able to use.

Ari reports that the most rewarding, yet incredibly difficult thing he was asked to do was to help interview families and survivors to collect clues that might help recover a relative, or to share the good news that someone was not in the building at the time of the collapse. Ari received a letter from the mayor of Bal Harbour village for his efforts, which reads:



BAL HARBOUR  
- VILLAGE -

GABRIEL GROISMAN  
MAYOR

July 16, 2021

Ari Teman  
Miami Beach, FL  
E: [ari@jcorps.org](mailto:ari@jcorps.org)

Dear Ari,

Thank you for your help with our community's efforts in responding to the Surfside Champlain Towers Tragedy. You spent day after day in the family reunification center volunteering in many ways to help the families of those lost in the tragedy as they awaited the ultimate news. Your work did not go unnoticed, as I saw you, on the ground, getting work done to assist in the mission of helping the families in various capacities. Thank you again and I wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavors.

Sincerely,



Mayor Gabriel Groisman

As Ari got more involved, he became a liaison between the different organizations, and ended up helping the survivors and families with all sorts of needs, from helping a father track down a trauma therapist so his daughter would eat, to getting food and supplies for the soldiers and volunteers, to getting a tent over the security checkpoint so families would not get rained on while the police checked them in, to a myriad of other random tasks.

Ari was asked to interact with Chabad, who was running the largest synagogue in the area, referred to as "The Shul". Ari was able to help them get a table and get set up for families to walk over and get help. Because he had to be home by the Court's imposed curfew, Ari continued his work through the night on WhatsApp – helping families and other organizations interface with them and with brokers to help find replacement homes, funding and supplies. Ari designed a form for the survivors to fill out listing any immediate needs – from housing to pet supplies, to therapy, because, again, he saw the system was a mess, and that organizing a database is something that he is quite expert at doing.

Even the relief effort at Surfside has come to rely on Ari and his final thought to your Honor is not about himself – but about others:



I really do hope Your Honor will allow me to remain free to help them. Many of the organizations have already left Surfside, and the news media are on to the next big thing. These people still do not have homes, funding, even equipment to do their jobs, and it will take months to get them back on their feet, and they will also need consistent voices to speak with to work through the trauma -- something I have known and experienced in a different form, firsthand. I have helped at Surfside and will continue to help if your Honor will allow it. Might I suggest a sentence of community service – I could do so much good at Surfside, where they seriously need an organizational person. Doesn't that make more sense than having me waste away at a federal prison facility. I hope that your Honor will consider the needs of these people – and my need to help others.

Respectfully submitted,

*Susan G. Kellman*  
Susan G. Kellman

/s/

Andrew J. Frisch

cc: All Counsel  
Ari Teman